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7 NOV 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Science and Technology

SUBJECT: Justification for Retention of the
IDEALIST U-2 Program

1. This memorandum is for information only. It contains preliminary information and background data regarding the IDEALIST U-2 Program which is on the agenda for discussion at the forthcoming ExCom meeting. A more detailed background information book containing IDEALIST supporting documents and statistics is being prepared, and will be available for your review on Friday, 8 November 1968.

2. Recently several formal documents and informal conversations have indicated that the IDEALIST Program will be discussed at the November ExCom meeting. These discussions, sparked by either the BOB, the DOD, or both, will most likely examine the need for continuation of this program. For example: The BOB at both the 1967 and 1968 Budget Hearings, announced that they would make a point of discussing the IDEALIST Program in depth at the November 1968 ExCom meeting. The BOB further states that these in-depth discussions would be directed at determining whether the program merits continuation. It, therefore, well behooves the Agency to be prepared to not only discuss its IDEALIST

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Program, but to have arguments that a valid requirement still exists for continuation of this program.

3. It can be assumed that, in these forthcoming discussions, the arguments advocating discontinuation of the IDEALIST Program will be much the same as those used in the past. Indeed, some of these points were used successfully and effectively by BOB/DOD during the debates leading up to the demise of the OXCART Program. The following are salient examples from these now familiar arguments:

a. The cost of the program exceeds the value of the returns derived from it.

b. The USAF could perform these reconnaissance tasks as well and at less expense to the Government.

c. There is no longer a need to differentiate between civilian and military pilots for reconnaissance missions.

d. Two units (CIA-SAC) means duplication of costs and expenses.

e. The IDEALIST Program has, on an average, completed far less operational flying time and missions than the USAF, therefore, the USAF is doing more productive work and should be given all the U-2 resources.

3. Undoubtedly, there are numerous other views in the same vein that could be brought to bear on this subject. It is not the intent of this paper to match argument for argument, or to rehash the reasons for and against the military assumption of the IDEALIST Program. If, however, through lack of diligence and effort on our part these roles and assets were to be lost by

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the Agency, the impact on the Intelligence Community would be regrettable. Therefore, this paper will attempt to record only the advantages and adaptability of the IDEALIST Program to the U. S. Intelligence Community, and will tend to show the program's ability to stand above the BOB/DOD contentions for its termination. There must be sound assurances that a continuation of this program will serve the best interests of the USA.

4. It is difficult to escape the fact that the U. S. Government in the years to come will have a continuing requirement for reconnaissance of denied territory which should be attributed to non-military resources. The missions and roles of the CIA U-2's have in the past, and indeed, will in the future, be entirely separate and different from any other U. S. reconnaissance aircraft, (including the SAC U-2's). The CIA U-2's, simply stated, are required to be capable of overflying denied territory in peacetime with relative impunity. Specifically, Agency U-2's have flown in excess of 500 missions to date. Twenty-six of these were flown over the Soviet Union between 1956-1960. Fifty were flown over Cuba during the period 1960-1962. Fifty-five missions were flown in the Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia area during the period 1961-1965. The latter two cases (Cuba and Southeast Asia) clearly reflect the requirement for and the use of covert manned reconnaissance during periods preceding crisis or hostilities. It is agreed that in certain situations, such as Cuba and Southeast Asia, it is logical that the mission can and should transition to the military whenever other overt military actions dictate.

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subsequent to 1960 wherein national objectives and policy did not subsequently require overt military

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involvement. There is little reason to believe that similar requirements will not be repeated in the future.

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☐ Therefore, prior to soliciting these approvals, considerable efforts are expended by the CIA to adjudge the overall risk and to estimate the success factor for each IDEALIST U-2 overflight mission to meet the requirement for obtaining the maximum of intelligence information with the minimum amount of political risk and exposure.

6. These requirements explain in part the additional cost and reduced number of IDEALIST operational missions/flying hours. It is the conviction of those experienced in U-2 operations that CIA development efforts over the past few years have in fact made the IDEALIST U-2 a reasonably acceptable low risk, highly responsive and flexible reconnaissance vehicle. It further bears noting that CIA enjoys a recognized unique capability for constantly and promptly developing and adapting equipment, tactics, and operational procedures that insure the lowest level of vulnerability for overflight aircraft. IDEALIST has served in the development of many unique techniques for application of the U-2 reconnaissance system on a world-wide basis. ☐

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8. In summary, and in view of the expected comparisons to be made of the CIA and SAC programs, it warrants reiterating that each program is designed to serve a specific purpose and it is more realistic to consider their relationship as complementary, and not competitive.

DONALD H. ROSS
Brigadier General, USAF
Director of Special Activities

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